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THE KINGDOM OF THE LORD JESUS

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SMALL BOOKS
ON GREAT
SUBJECTS — XVIII.

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Mackennal Library

FROM THE ESTATE OF

FRANCIS GREENWOOD PEABODY

Overseer, Lecturer,
Parkman Professor of Theology,
Plummer Professor of Christian Morals,
Dean, Professor Emeritus
1877–1936

Small Books on Great Subjects.—XVIII.

THE KINGDOM OF THE LORD JESUS.

By ALEXANDER MACKENNAL, D.D.

THE KINGDOM OF THE LORD JESUS.

By
Alexander Mackennal, D.D.

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Prefatory Words.

The first four of the following discourses were preached on the four Advent Sundays of 1899; the last on New Year's Sunday, 1900. The season of Advent and the New Year always awakens, in the Christian heart, thoughts about the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus—its aim and method, and the conditions which further or hinder its coming. The special themes here treated, and the mode of their treatment, were suggested by the War in South Africa, which no Englishman could forget, whether in Church or out of Church. New Year's Sunday—January

7th, 1900—was being observed by many congregations as a day of heart-searching as to the lessons of the war, and prayer for abiding peace among the nations.

During the last fifty years the cause of peace has, like other causes dear to the Christian soul, known periods of progress and delay. But it stands alone in the sudden and violent changes of national sentiment which it has experienced. Sometimes the nation has thought that peace was on its way; then there has come a general doubt of its possibility; many have seemed not to think it, always and under all circumstances, desirable.

It is the object of the following sermons to suggest the reason of these marked revulsions in public sentiment. Peace has been treated as an end in itself; "the greatest of national interests"; the wisest, the only, mode in which each nation can work out its destiny consistently with

the working out of their destinies by all other nations. In reality, peace is one of "the fruits of the Spirit"; it cannot be secured except by the loyal adoption of the whole doctrine of Christian living; it is part of "the method of Jesus." There can be no abiding peace while men are habitually seeking objects, cherishing tempers, following methods which naturally and "inevitably" lead to war.

This small book is a very feeble, very partial, presentation of a subject which, in its relation to Christian doctrine and ethics, political philosophy and social habit, demands powers of speculative and constructive thought to which the preacher makes no pretence. But all sound Christian thinking has its origin in the personal spiritual life; and probably there were never so many souls aiming after "the imitation of Christ" as there

are to day. I desire nothing more than to be a fellow-worker with them.

> *"May the God of peace, who brought again from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep with the blood of the everlasting covenant, even our Lord Jesus, make us perfect in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is well-pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen."*

Bowdon, Cheshire,
22nd March, 1900.

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I.

The Subjects of the Kingdom.

THE SUBJECTS OF THE KINGDOM.

"Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause am I come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice."
JOHN xviii. 37.

WHEN Jesus stood awaiting the verdict of Pilate the tribunal was very different from what it seemed. The meek prisoner, disdaining to press for acquittal, although He knew that He could speak words which would at once refute the charge; maintaining silence after He had tested His judge and proved Him false of heart, was really on the throne of judgment. The proud

governor, avoiding so long as he could the hearing of the case, and only taking his seat to pervert justice, was really at the bar.

Jesus was fully aware of this. Not more surely will He be the searcher of men's hearts when before Him all nations will appear, than He was at this hour when He was expecting condemnation. It was Friday morning; on the Tuesday He had said, in presence of the people, "Now is the judgment of this world, now will the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, shall draw all men unto me." Only a few hours ago He had told His disciples that a new sense of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment, would come to

men because of their treatment of Him. There would come conviction "of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to the Father, and ye behold me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged." It is a very solemn thought, that in all we do, especially in what we do in our action under the pressure of responsibility for others, we are passing judgment on ourselves; and that the criterion to which we are submitted is, what we are thinking, how we are acting, in regard of Christ.

That which was in the consciousness of Jesus has become the verdict of history. The cross above St. Peter's is the repudiation by Rome of the counsel and deed

of Pilate. The most thoughtful of the Jews have long been convinced, and they are now acknowledging, that the death of Christ was the great crime of the nation; and that until confession is made that Jesus of Nazareth was the honour of His people, the truest representative of the Hebrew race, "forsaken Israel" will "wander lone." In all Christendom—that is, in the foremost nations of the world, those who have made history, and with whom is the future—there is continually repeated the condemnation of Pilate, the judge who punished the innocent and let the evil-doers go free. Continually there rises the ascription of glory to Christ. "Suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, dead, and

buried . . . whose Kingdom shall have no end."

But, though the world has recognised the moral and spiritual grandeur of the Lord Jesus Christ, the secret of His rule and the method of extending His kingdom have not been learned even by the Church. The kingdom is of the truth; the King is such by witness unto the truth; they who are of the truth will be His subjects; they and only they will hear his voice, or secure His sway. We make many interesting investigations into the times and seasons of the spread of the gospel; the causes of the progress of Christianity; many anxious inquiries into the slow advance of missions, the decay of religion in Christian lands. Our

studies themselves, the eagerness with which we search into conditions and methods, may only blind us to the essence of the matter: "Every one who is of the truth heareth my voice." There can be no revival of religion, no cure for the heart-sickness which is ours as we think of worldliness in the churches, and the desperate confusions which are among the so-called Christian peoples, until we recognise, and act on the recognition, that only they who are of the truth can hear Christ's voice; only they advance His kingdom; only by them and among them can the gospel spread. Questions about resources, abundant or scanty; modes of action, wise or ill-considered; questions as to lack or

abundance of enthusiasm; even the question of strong or weak faith; the reality or the fruitlessness of prayer—sum themselves up in this: What are we in search of? Do we want real or professing Christians? Will we have Christ's methods or those of worldly wisdom? Is it men who are of the truth we are eager for, or numbers whose adhesion we may make use of—as we think—for carrying on the work of Christ?

There are two great hindrances to the hearing of Christ's voice—the want of sincerity, and the want of the sense of reality. Frederick Robertson makes much of this distinction; and his caution is valuable, in so far as it

reminds us that truth is not emotional or subjective; that it is conformity to fact. But, actually, the two things are inseparable; the man who has small regard for facts is sure to become an insincere man; the insincere man will lose his power to see things as they are.

Speaking generally, we may say that the Jews had sincerity; they were intensely earnest; there was such a thing as "the Jewish conscience," these were men of conscience. So, at least, the Apostle Paul has taught us. He speaks from self-knowledge, "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And this I also did."

And from his own experience he interprets the conduct of his countrymen. "I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God." But they lacked the feeling for reality; they were wrapped up in their own conceit; they could not see the beauty, the power, the grace of Christ when He was before them. Their zeal was "not according to knowledge." "I persecuted the Church of God. I did it ignorantly in unbelief." This indifference to reality was the sin of the Jews. The remembrance of it made the apostle acknowledge himself to have been the chief of sinners. It wrung from his heart a bitter lamentation over the obduracy which brought about Israel's fall. And it gradually

wrought the destruction of that fidelity to conscience, which was the pride of later Judaism. Christ brands them hypocrites. Their very stedfastness of conviction made them radically false.

Pilate had the sense of reality; this was, indeed, a choice fruit of Roman training, an eminently Roman characteristic. He perceived, almost at once, the innocence of Jesus; he knew the malignity of the chief priests and the Pharisees. But he had no sincerity. He was a heartless man; and so he became a great criminal. And in the process he lost all his perspicacity. He saw no danger to the corrupt Roman Empire, feared nothing, from the influence of Christ. "Pilate saith, What

is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find no fault in him . . . will ye, therefore, that I release unto you the King of the Jews?"

Let us turn from Pilate and the Jews to Christ's disciples. They were a very mingled set of people, the eleven, the flower of Galilee; Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea; the publicans and harlots; the holy women, who followed Jesus in Galilee, and ministered to Him of their substance. But they all had the sense of reality; they could recognise Jesus, feel the charm of His grace and truth, feel the reality of it. Jesus was not only winning, He was true. And the grace of loyalty was in

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every one of them. They were imperfect, vacillating, weak; but their hearts once won turned to Him again and again; they were with Him at the last. And because they were with Him at the last, they are with Him in the new world which He has founded. "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations; and I appoint unto you a kingdom, even as my Father appointed unto me, that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom; and ye shall sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." "I say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of the grave shall not prevail against it."

Think of Philip and Thomas—

what confusion is in their thinking, but how they go to the root of the matter; of Peter, with his many faults, and his unerring sagacity of faith: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we have believed, and know that Thou art the Holy One of God." Think of Zaccheus, equally simple, when he climbs the tree to look on Jesus, and when he promises to give the half of his goods to the poor, and to restore fourfold to any man whom he has wronged. Think of her who "came and wept," and washed His feet with her tears and poured on them her ointment. Think of Joseph of Arimathea, timid but loyal; and of Nicodemus, stealing to Jesus by night, but unable,

in the Sanhedrim, to suppress his indignation: "Doth our law condemn any man before it hear him?" bringing on himself the condemnation which has become his honour, "Art thou also of Galilee?" What should we have done had we been there? Should we have joined that company? Should we have felt ourselves at home among them? We should not have been excluded on any ground of past sinfulness, for any feeling of unworthiness, any weakness, any imperfection, any liability to failure, any bitter memory or shameful fall. But we should have been found out if we had been insincere, or half-hearted, or captious in our judgment of Jesus, or unready to follow Him in

simplicity of service and loyalty of heart. We should have found ourselves out; and we must either have repented of our infidelity, or discovered ourselves doomed to alienation from the fellowship. We should have been like Uzziah in the temple, when the leprosy shewed white upon his skin, "Azariah, the chief priest, and all the priests looked upon him, and, behold, he was leprous in his forehead, and they thrust him out quickly from thence; yea, himself also hasted to go out, because the Lord had smitten him." We should have been like the young ruler who left Jesus sorrowing, and knew that the reason why he could not stay was that he "had great possessions." We should have

been like Judas Iscariot in the upper room, "he went out straightway: and it was night."

That which all these disciples had in common has continued to be the mark, the only distinctive mark, of His followers. It is their strength, the one thing which is needed for the progress of the Kingdom of God. Jesus Christ is the King; they who recognise His royalty, and are willing to obey Him, are the subjects of the kingdom. Everything else is of minor importance. Wealth or poverty, learning or ignorance, eloquence or slowness of speech, persuasive manner or a rudeness which calls for much toleration, fervour or caution, culture or bar-

barism—these matters, of which we make so much, are as nothing in view of this one qualification for being subjects of the Kingdom of Christ. His kingdom will advance, not only in numbers added to the churches, but in the prevalence of Christian thought, the adoption of Christ's will in the policy of nations, the triumph of Christian morals over the ways of men, as we trust His own simple words; it will not advance by all our wisdom, our enthusiasm, our giving and our praying, if we be lacking here.

What a wonderful composure Christ reveals, what a sense of power is in Him, as He stands before Pilate. He had not asserted His royalty, men had found it out;

but when they asserted it, it was not disowned. He would not accept the kingdom they would have thrust upon Him; nevertheless, He did not deny the title, nor belie His own consciousness of moral and spiritual authority. Pilate saw this. The answer of Jesus to his first question made it plain that here was no schemer, no rebel; constituted government was not going to be assailed by Him. But Pilate got from Him no repudiation of the title, which was on the lips of the Jews a name of blasphemy, on those of the Governor a name of scorn. "Thou art a king, then?" "Thou sayest it; I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause am I come into the world, that I

should bear witness unto the truth. Everyone that is of the truth heareth my voice."

Christ would not, could not, repudiate the title. He was sure that, on the simplicity of His disciples' faith and obedience, the Kingdom of God could rest; that where these were it would advance until it filled the world.

Pilate asks, contemptuously, "What is truth?" So ask, and with a like impatient temper, our politicians; so ask many of our churchmen; so we often ask in our own hearts. We want to add to the truth the forces in which we have learned to trust. We try to get men who are not Christians to appear to be so; and, therefore, we urge them with motives

they can recognise and feel. And this we do in order to advance the Kingdom of God. The silent prisoner rebukes us, calls us back to Him. He is King, but His kingdom is not of this world. They who are of the truth, and only they, will hear His voice.

II.

The Method of the Kingdom.

THE METHOD OF THE KINGDOM.

"And one out of the multitude said unto him, Master, bid my brother divide the inheritance with me. But he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you? And he said unto them, Take heed, and keep yourselves from all covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."

LUKE xii. 13-15.

IT was very natural for this man to make his complaint to Jesus. Probably he was right in counting himself defrauded. Simplicity of purpose appears in this abrupt public appeal. If he had been dishonest he would have sought Jesus apart; would have insinuated the motives which one who has no faith in the thorough integrity of

others knows how to play upon; would have carefully presented his case in its most plausible aspects. His words reveal also a large sense of the moral authority of the Lord Christ. He believes Jesus has only to speak to his brother, and the wrong will be promptly set right.

We may be quite sure that Christ was never indifferent to wrong; but we may see, too, how inevitable was the indignation, followed by sorrow, He felt at this interruption of His discourse. He was burdened with a double solicitude. He saw the degradation of Hebrew piety; Jewish Puritanism had become ostentatious and hollow Pharisaism, and its destruction was at hand. He had before

Him also the certainty of His own approaching end. "I am come to send fire upon the earth, and what would I? Oh! that it were already kindled!" "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" He was preparing His disciples for the day of judgment so rapidly drawing nigh; and He was called away to master the details of a poor little strife about property.

I put the matter before you thus because I want you to consider one of the gravest problems now confronting Christian men and women. The preaching of the gospel has been followed by a great quickening of the moral sense among the

civilised nations. The bad old Pagan world has passed away; morally impotent Judaism has become a thing of nought. Slavery is professedly abolished; neglect of children and disregard for the personality of women have given place to anxious care for their highest interests; the rights of man have been successfully asserted. These are marks of the coming of Christ's Kingdom; they are triumphs of His rule. Righteousness and brotherhood are the watchwords of the new world in which we live.

With this has come a sense of what the gospel might do for the world's amelioration. No wrong comes to light, but the interference of the churches is expected. The

sphere of the Christian man's action has widened until his interest is enlisted in every department of human life; schools, hospitals, municipal government, social wrongs, political righteousness, amusements, literature—the whole world is calling out for Christian aggressiveness. In some quarters every man who has a wrong to set right brings it to his minister. There is not a cause of righteousness which does not make its appeal to the churches to do their duty.

We ought not to complain of this; we should be very tolerant of asperity and unreasonableness in accusations brought against us of sluggishness and indifference. These demands are a touching

tribute to the majesty of Jesus. If the accumulated wrongs of ages are put down to the unfaithfulness of the Christian Church, that is only a distorted exhibition of the faith which men have come to cherish in Christ's gospel and the force of Christian effort.

Nor ought we to be contemptuous of these appeals. They are the utterance of human misery; revelations of men's deep dissatisfaction with the conditions men have brought about. We may be persuaded that the complaints touch only the shallower matters of life and conduct; our own faith and love and hope may move in a clearer, loftier world. But it is not for us to plead the realities of the gospel as an

excuse for carelessness about social evils; it is not for us to say—"I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down. Let the potsherds of the earth strive with the potsherds of the earth; we are citizens of heaven."

But equally must we be on our guard lest we be so engrossed with the troubles under which men are suffering as to become blind to that which is at the root of all; lest we forget what is the aim of the gospel, what are its revelations, its spirit, and its ways of working; and so lose our very power of helping men in our attempts to set things right about them.

It is here that Christ's words

come to our aid. He refused to interfere in the quarrel between these two brothers. "Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?" But He did not stop there. "He said unto them, Take heed, and keep yourselves from all covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."

I. Christ went to the root of the matter. One brother might have been right, the other wrong: perhaps both were in error—the wrong could hardly have been all on one side. But the secret of their striving was covetousness, that is, the desire to have. One may be quite right in a particular case, and very unchristian in the

motives inducing him to seek his right. The passion for justice may be associated with a desire to act very wrongly when justice is done. If a man wants higher wages that he may have more to spend on drink; if a man exacts the payment of his lawful debts that he may have more to gratify his pride or to increase his power of exaction; the Christian desire to help him is paralysed; there comes over us the sickening sense that an appeal to the churches is wholly out of place. All the while it remains true that better wages for working people may mean better houses, and better houses a higher morality; that easier circumstances may help more gracious ways of living; and these objects

are worthy of our heartiest co-operation.

Covetousness, says Jesus, is the root of strife. And James, who was His brother, and whose epistle repeats so much of Christ's own teaching, gives us a vivid picture of the same truth. "Whence are wars? and whence your fightings among yourselves? Come they not hence, of your pleasures that war in your members? You lust, and you have not; you kill, and are jealous, and you cannot obtain; you are fighting and warring. You have not, because you ask not. You ask and receive not, because you are asking amiss, that you may spend upon your pleasures." It is a pitiful picture; but it is profoundly true. The heart is

often taken out of Christian men in social effort, political conflict, the desire to settle family feuds, by the perception of the low motive animating all. We cannot act without pain; we can scarcely mix ourselves up with these questions and keep unviolated the bloom of piety. We may rightly say—"Who made us judges, or dividers over you? There are law-courts; seek the help of such as are appointed to attend to these matters."

There are law courts; and we have to do with the making and the administration of laws. We cannot free ourselves from the responsibility of seeking that our laws be just and our magistrates righteous. But when we have

done all, we have not made men more Christian; and that must always be the effort of the churches.

Such is Christ's unvarying teaching. He was confronted, for instance, with the crying evil of divorce. Malachi gives us a shocking description of the Jews after the restoration; deserted women bringing their tears and weeping and sighing to the very altar of the Lord, where the husbands who had abandoned them made their offering, and piously wondered when they were told that the Lord would not regard nor receive it. But beneath divorce was levity in love, wicked surrender to lust, the cruel habit of self-indulgence in men who

would dismiss a wife because they were tired of her. Christ would not take a side in the controversy among the Pharisees about divorce; the controversy was so hypocritical, so foul. There is a certain hardness in his reference to Moses' permission of divorce, as if He would dismiss the theme. But He speaks expansively when He warns His disciples against adultery, and tells them that adultery may be in a look.

This was His sphere; not the outward things of life, which can neither defile nor hallow, but men's thoughts, their desires, their estimates. "From within, out of the heart of man," come the passions that mar the peace of life. And His apostle Peter

has given us the other side of the same truth. In the hidden man of the heart abides "that which is not corruptible, that which is in the sight of God of great price."

II. The Christian life has a method of its own in dealing with wrongs. No battle can settle a question of right; therefore, a just man cannot be satisfied with the arbitrament of war. No law is sufficient for all cases, and in the administration of law is no infallibility, absolute justice is never done; therefore, the just man has often to bear wrong without complaining. Justice is a noble word, but there is a nobler; "mercy rejoiceth against judgment." Many a man is perplexed

by the unrighteousness which still inheres in all human procedure; and with the apparently erring, certainly slow, process of the Divine judgment. All wrongs are not righted even under the Christian dispensation, and among Christian men and Christian nations. And men say, "Where is the token of Christ's coming? As it was in the old world, as it is among the non-christian peoples, so is it with ourselves." We know the answer—"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness; but is long-suffering to you-ward, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

There are two truths a Christian man should always bear in mind.

"A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." Our Lord does not apply this truth harshly. He calls on faith to temper fear. "Howbeit, seek ye the kingdom which the Father is well-pleased to give you, and all these things shall be added to you." But even should it seem otherwise, the Christian can bear disappointment. Frederick Robertson puts it thus: "For the oppressed and the defrauded this was the true consolation and compensation. This man had sustained so much loss. Well, how is he consoled? By the thought of retaliation? By the promise of revenge? By the assurance that he shall have what he ought by right to have? Nay, but thus, as

it were: Thou hast lost so much, but thy self remains. 'A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.'"

There is an austere beauty about this exposition which reminds us of Marcus Aurelius. The second Christian truth goes more deeply into the very heart of our faith. It is set forth by St. Peter—1 Ep. II. 19-21—"This is acceptable, if for conscience toward God a man endureth griefs, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it if, when ye sin, and are buffeted, ye shall take it patiently? But if, when ye do well, and suffer, ye shall take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an

example, that ye should follow his steps."

This is a very hard saying, but I could not preach the gospel without affirming it. It runs through the apostolic teaching. "Why do ye not rather suffer wrong?" says St. Paul; and he is not conscious of defiling the well-spring of righteousness by this appeal. To many saints it has become the dearest practical truth, the one they most love to apply. The end of the gospel is not to do bare justice between man and man, nation and nation, it is to "overcome evil with good." And evil is often most effectually overcome by being allowed to work itself out; then men, being startled at the revelation of themselves, will turn

repentingly to God. "What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, that the ordinance of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit."

The apostle does not shrink from an application of this truth, which almost startles us as profane. "Him who knew not sin God made sin for us; that we might become the righteousness of God in him." That does not mean that our sin was imputed to Christ; but that Christ's death was the foulest crime, the one great self-condemning act of man. Christ was not only the sufferer,

He was a lover of righteousness. He might have prevented this iniquity; He did not. He permitted it to be wrought on Him, in order that men might be for ever turned from evil. The issue of the Cross is the defeat of sin in man, by the quickening of a larger sense of righteousness which makes wrong impossible.

This is the truth "as truth is in Jesus." It is sometimes very hard for Christians to work, even in righteous causes, with men who have no glimpse of it; to whom it would be matter of ribald merriment, ungodly scorn. But Christ has committed it to His people to be set forth; to set it forth is the object for which He has called them.

III. How is it to be set forth? How shall this truth win its final victory? Chiefly by individual action. No law can enforce it, but it will appear prevailingly in the life of those who are ready to conform themselves to Christ's highest teaching.

What a relief it must have been to Jesus to turn from this man to those who, He was sure, would listen to His voice; imperfect, ignorant, only half following His words, yet ready to hear them, treasuring them in their hearts, sure that one day they would find His teaching intelligible, and would be able to obey His will. And what a relief it is to the few, even in congregations of Christians, who are willing to take His utter-

ances in their absolute simplicity, without cavil and without abatement, when they can turn to Him and hold communion with Him. Reading His words, we hear His very voice, we have vision of His heavenly grace: gradually our hearts beat in fellowship with His own.

"I say unto you, my friends, Be not afraid of them which kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will warn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him." "Be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on." "Fear not, little flock,

for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

Then comes that exquisite picture of the good and faithful servant whom the Lord at His coming will find watching. What is he doing? Not seeking even his just rights: the love of God has displaced in him the love of money. He is not working for gain; he is serving his brethren. "The Lord said, Who then is the faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall set over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season. Blessed is that servant whom his lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing."

And now you will be asking what sort of world that would be

in which the main stress of Christian effort should be put forth in the direction I have indicated. Let me ask you how has come about that gracious change, partial indeed and feeble, but real, which has already been accomplished in Christendom? The Christian home has put an end to polygamy, and made that customary which the disciples thought impossible—that a man and a woman should live together for life without either the fear or the remedy of divorce. Slavery is an economic blunder and a constant social danger; but if it had not been for the saints England would never have paid her millions to free her slaves. The example of Christian living prepares the world for ethical

arguments and invincible appeals. It forms and trains the constituency whose voice demands the removal of wrongs which have become intolerable.

Look at the two questions which are to-day giving us most concern —the distribution of wealth, the wars which pain us to the heart. If men have begun to clamour for a larger socialism, it is because the sight of misery has wounded, first the Christian, and then the public, conscience. The world would never have grown tired of the sight of wealth enjoyed only by the few, if some Christians had not shewn us how nobly it is possible for those to live, who have as though they possessed not. If the war fever is far less pro-

nounced to-day than it was in '53 and '54; if there are hundreds of thousands troubled in conscience and self-reproachful, while there were only units to protest against the Crimean War; it is because since that war there have been two generations of quiet people, living less and less for their own ends, casting themselves for social security upon their faith in God, willing to suffer wrong rather than weaken the authority of Christ, or lose the sweetness of His Spirit.

This is the method of Christ's Kingdom—"Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for their's is the kingdom of heaven.

"Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

"Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled.

"Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

"Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called sons of God."

III.

The Propagandism of the Kingdom.

THE PROPAGANDISM OF THE KINGDOM.

"But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes. And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him unto his will."—II. TIMOTHY ii. 23-26.

IF you will cast your eye on the marginal notes in your Bibles, you will see that the eight references to passages parallel to our text are all taken from the Epistles to Timothy and Titus. Turning to the passages, and collating them with other references, you will be struck with the accumulation of

warnings, addressed to these two young ministers, not to be controversial. After you have read these passages, quietly read the two Epistles to Timothy; you will have a vivid impression of the state of things which he was left in Ephesus to correct. The truth of the gospel was in imminent danger. Its central message was being overlooked; errors were multiplying; nothing was more needed than sound teaching, earnest application of the truth. And everywhere Paul is saying the same thing—"Be not controversial; beware of strife."

This is very remarkable, especially as coming from the Apostle Paul. He was a skilful controversialist. He was so by natural bent.

We cannot read his letters and speeches without seeing how freely his mind moved in argument; how readily there came to him dialectical home-thrust and rhetorical appeal. He was a trained disputant; the Jewish schools made controversialists; and he had "profited in the Jews' religion beyond many of his own age among his own countrymen." We think we hear him, in our text, speaking out of a sorrowful experience of his own; he had known something of this "youthful lust," and he solemnly warns his young disciple against it.

Controversy might be regarded as Timothy's great duty in the circumstances amid which he found himself; but St. Paul evidently did not think so. His warnings on this

point are the more impressive, because he so urgently reminds Timothy to be stedfast in the faith, as if he suspected a constitutional lack of courage in him.

Baldwin Brown has said many wise words, but never a wiser than when he pointed out that intellectual and oratorical skill may be as much weapons of the world as is the sword. The barbarian chief, listening to the story of Christ's trial and sufferings, leaped to his feet, saying: "Why was I not there with my warriors?" It was a natural impulse, but it was not Christian. Jesus said, "If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is my king-

dom not from hence." There have been times when I have seemed again to see His sorrowful face: seemed to hear Him saying, "My kingdom is not of this world. My servants should not argue, should not deliver these clever speeches."

The thoughtful author of *Ecce Homo* has pointed out that Christ's own method of teaching was not that of intellectual acuteness, not that of brilliant utterance; that He used mild and gracious talk, wholly simple, charged with tenderness and natural piety. And one who knew Him well, the publican Levi, has given us a touching delineation of what he, for one, saw in his Lord. "The Pharisees went out, and took

counsel against him, how they might destroy him. And Jesus perceiving it withdrew from thence: and many followed him; and he healed them all, and charged them that they should not make him known: that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying,

Behold, my servant whom I have chosen;
My beloved in whom my soul is well-pleased:
I will put my spirit upon him,
And he shall declare judgment to the nations.
He shall not strive, nor cry aloud;
Neither shall any one hear his voice in the streets.
A bruised reed shall he not break,
And smoking flax shall he not quench,
Till he send forth judgment unto victory.
And in his name shall the nations hope.

Thoughtful Christians have at last learned that it was a disastrous, and not a triumphant, hour for the kingdom of Christ, when Constantine saw the cross in the heavens, and heard the words, "Conquer in this"; when the fortunes of the Church were bound up with Imperial policy and military prowess. The Emperor corrupted the gospel, which he took under his patronage. Other generations, wiser than our own, will come to see that Christ's cause sustained another severe disaster in those years when the public advocacy of the truth was committed so largely to men trained in Greek schools of rhetoric and Roman courts of law. Many, very many, of the fathers were accomplished

disputants; trained to argue; skilful pleaders. The method of their education was that which Paul is here condemning. They were taught to discuss "foolish and ignorant questions" for the sake of the rhetorical and logical discipline, and they profited by their training. One thing most of them failed to learn, that "the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient." They left behind them a great and deserved reputation; they enlarged the range of Christian thinking, and enriched the world's learning; for some centuries they were leaders in intellectual effort; but for them philosophy might have died out. But they did not bring peace to

the Church, nor help to preserve its spirituality of conception, its vital power. The real progress of Christ's kingdom, its saving of souls, was due to men and women of a very different stamp—the humble teachers, coming into daily contact with suffering, guilty, loving hearts, bringing light into homes, turning prisons into places where men were renewed unto God.

In some respects Richard Baxter was the most interesting of the second generation of the English Puritans. He was saintly, devoted, resolute, unwearied in his endeavours to save men, a living martyr for the truth of Christ. In his old age he wrote the story of his life; and he pathetically contrasts the errors of his youthful ministry with

what he had learned in his later years. He was one of the most controversial men of an age of controversy; he thoroughly believed whatever truth he accepted, and set it forth with earnestness and skill. As one of his biographers admirably expresses it, he "expected to win all hearts by attacking all understandings." In the beginning of his ministry he was a chaplain in Cromwell's army, and he tells us how he acted. "I set myself from day to day to find out the corruptions of the soldiers, and to discourse and dispute them out of their mistakes, both religious and political. My life among them was a daily contending against seducers, and gently arguing with the more tractable."

When the war was over, he went preaching in the same fashion through Leicestershire, Staffordshire and Derbyshire; and he tells us the result. "Whatever came of it afterward, I know not; but at the present they commonly seemed to be much affected."

"This token of my weakness," he further says, "accompanied my younger studies, that I was very apt to start up controversies in the way of my practical writings, and also more desirous to acquaint the world with all that I took to be the truth, and to assault those books by name which I thought did tend to deceive them, and did contain unsound and dangerous doctrine. . . . I did not sufficiently discern then how much in most

of our controversies is verbal, and upon mutual mistakes. And withal I knew not how impatient divines were of being contradicted, nor how it would stir up all their powers to defend what they have once said, and to rise up against the truth which is thus thrust upon them, as the mortal enemy of their honour: and I knew not how hardly men's minds are changed from their former apprehensions, be the evidence never so plain."

In a later place he speaks with the sweetness of a ripe old age. "I am less for a disputing way than ever, believing that it tempteth men to bend their wits to defend their errors, and oppose the truth, and hindereth usually

their information. And the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle to all men, &c. Therefore I am most in judgment for a learning or a teaching way of converse. In all companies I will be glad either to hear those speak that can teach me, or to be heard of those that have need to learn."

Few lessons more require than this to be impressed on all who would advance Christ's kingdom; whether pastors in their teaching, evangelists in missions, advocates of great public causes, or parents watchful to instil truth into their children's hearts, and friends seeking to draw their friends along the heavenly way. Especially would I

commend it to our young people, full of enthusiasms, burning with a holy zeal to turn men from error into the ways of life. The orator plays a large part in all our best endeavours; he fixes men's attention, commands their interest, is greeted and followed with their approval. The young are sure to admire him, sure to imitate him; he is the hero in modern life. But what a price he pays for his excellence! There is a spiritual law of the conservation of energy. In any controversial victory, that only remains of abiding efficacy which is of the truth. Any advantage gained over an adversary, other than is due to the simple truth, is sure to be followed by reaction. After the plaudits so freely given

to the clever presentation of one side of a question, to shafts of satire, and happy refutations of an opponent, there comes an often painful awakening to the reality of what has been said. We begin to suspect that we were too easily excited; we remember and resent any unfairness in judgment or lack of consideration for those who were attacked; we learn to distrust men who draw us on by their style of speaking; we acquire the habit of weighing what is spoken to us; it is the truth, not the cleverness, of what we listen to which we learn to value. Believe me, in the still hours when we commune with our own hearts, commune with God, simplicity and self-restraint, gentleness, modera-

tion, the desire to win men to truth and holiness, count for far more than dialectical ability or oratorical force.

The truth which Christians have to set forth needs the advocacy of men who are like-minded with itself. It is the truth "as truth is in Jesus"; "the servant of the Lord must not strive." There are few self-searchings more poignant, more humiliating, no acts of contrition marked by more bitter tears, than those which come to us when we convict ourselves of unfairness, or of heat, in the advocacy of Christ's cause. It is so unworthy of the holy name by which we are called to set forth the gospel of peace in the spirit of one who is deter-

mined on victory. We vainly wish we could abate the passions we have excited; we deplore our own successes; we pray that we may be forgiven the sin which mingles with our holy things. I suppose most of us know what this experience is—how long shall we go on confessing, and falling again into the same sin? If we were to spend in preparation of the heart before God the time we give to elaboration of arguments, and preparing sharp impromptus; if we were to commune with Christ before speaking, as we have often had after speaking to address Him in shame and sorrow for our wounding words, we should go to our work "gentle toward all men, apt to teach, patient, in

meekness instructing those that oppose themselves." We might find a new meaning in those gracious words, "take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you."

There is a two-fold feeling in the words which St. Paul uses of the persons among whom lies the work of those who would advance Christ's kingdom. There is condemnation, there is also tender considerateness. "If peradventure God will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." Religious error is so much

graver, sadder than we think. Men who are in it are in too doleful a case for us to argue them out of it, or assail them with oratorical arts. "They are in the snare of the devil, taken captive by him at his will." The physician often scolds the man who has taken cold through his own folly; but if the patient is down in fever or in phthisis, all the physician's effort is to recover him. The heart to scold is gone. No power but God's can recover him who is far gone in religious error; and it may be that God will give him repentance, he may arouse himself out of the snare of the devil. The importunity of prayer and tenderness when we know that it is with such distress we have to deal, and

are watching for the great deliverance of God's Spirit with all our heart and soul and strength, will move in us a holy passion, to which the vulgarity and worldliness of arts of dialectic and rhetoric will be unknown.

I have had a long experience and observation of the methods by which we sometimes seek to advance Christ's kingdom. I have come to sorrow deeply over the waste of Christian earnestness, because of the wrong temper in which our earnestness displays itself. And I long for such a baptism of the Church as that of Christ, when we should see the Spirit of Christ descending, like a dove, and abiding upon us. "The

end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned." A new method of Christian advocacy would seem to me a hopeful sign for the triumph of the cross. There are questions agitated among us not worth our effort; "foolish and ignorant questions," with no power of discipline in them, no power either to command a Christian's faith or to nourish Christian character. These can only "gender strifes." And to the graver matters of belief and duty, matters which are of infinite moment, and in which our loyalty is pledged, the apostle's words apply—"The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men; apt to teach, patient, in

meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth, and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him unto his will."

IV.

The Universality of the Kingdom.

THE UNIVERSALITY OF THE KINGDOM.

The eleven disciples went into Galilee, unto the mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted. And Jesus came to them and spake unto them, saying, All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.

MATT. XXVIII. 16-20.

THE first words of Christ's first charge to His apostles were these, "Go not into any way of the Gentiles, and enter not into any city of the Samaritans: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." He gives a reason for this

restriction; the time during which He was to be with them was too short for them to scatter on a world wide errand. "Verily, I say unto you, you will not have gone through the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come." We see another reason in their unfitness for their larger work. It would need all the teaching Jesus could give them, all the influence they would receive from close association with Him, to remove their prejudices and make them know the good news they were to preach; they must catch His Spirit before they could awaken men's faith in Him. It could have been no more than a passing impulse in those days, the desire to speak of Jesus to the heathen; and that impulse would die out as

speedily as it was inspired. They thought they knew so much, and were so firm; in reality they knew so little, and were so unstedfast. On the way to Gethsemane, He said to them—and there seems a profound weariness in His words —"Do ye now believe? Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is come, that you will be scattered, every man to his own, and will leave me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me."

But there was another, and a deeper, reason for His restraint; the gospel of the world's salvation was not until Christ had died and was risen again. Only then was the revelation of the Father in the Son complete; only then were men made acquainted with them-

selves, the extent of their alienation from God. Christ was burdened with a double secret, which He could not utter in words, but which the Cross would reveal—the fulness of His sacrificial purpose, the greatness of the world's sin. Nothing in the Saviour's ministry is more touching than the silence imposed on Him concerning that which was dearest to His heart. He longed to gather all men to Him, but He could not. He had brought with Him from Heaven the passion for the world's salvation, and He was constrained to keep it to Himself. "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" Now the restraint on Him is removed.

Men will look on Him whom they have pierced, and will mourn because of Him. Now they will be able to see the Father in the Son. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son the propitiation for our sins." How gladly must He have seen the disciples waiting for him in Galilee, the scene of His earliest and most varied association with them, where their memories would be awakened and their hearts touched. "And Jesus came to them and spake unto them." Doubtless He said much to them which has not been recorded, but this was the substance of His charge. "All authority hath been given to me in heaven and on

earth. Go ye therefore, and bring to discipleship all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

It is a very captivating vision which Jesus sets before us. He is predicting that all the nations will come to oneness of religion—"baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." He is predicting for all the nations identity of moral habit and idea—"teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you,"

Christ shews us the secret of divisions between man and man, nation and nation. When we recall the history of Europe, the ambitions of its peoples, its various creeds, its armaments, its war of tariffs, its racial jealousies, we have a sad picture, but not a hopeless one. We know at least what we quarrel about, we understand where we differ; and there is always the possibility of harmony when we understand our disagreements. The Christian man deplores the unfaithfulness of Christendom, but in Christendom is at least the possibility of mutual sympathies. There is a common sense of morality to which it is not always vain to make appeal. We have the same Scriptures, the

same object of worship, the name of Christ is not without power to touch the conscience and win the heart. But when Europeans come into contact with Hindus or Chinese, the sense of alienation seems radical. The idea of God is different; the word religion carries with it associations which cannot be made to tally. Not only are the moral codes unlike; there seem few moral ideas by which we can understand each other. And so our intercourse is full of occasions of offence; underneath the transactions of commerce and political alliances there is no social unity. Personal friendships are superficial; intermarriage is impossible; attempts at intimacy reveal that between

us and them there is a great gulf fixed.

Some such picture as this was present to the mind of Christ; and His words bespeak a composure of self-confidence which is no other than Divine. It was in His heart to win all to love and allegiance of Him. He felt He could do it; He knew He could do it. "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth." And He saw all barriers melting away between man and man; He was sure that, in following Him, they would come to understand each other and be at peace. There was nothing in His teaching to arouse mutual antipathies; everything to draw men who received Him close to one

another. He had nothing to promise men which could awaken jealousy; opportunities of service and powers to serve were all He had to give; in receiving these, in benefiting, and being benefited by one another, His disciples would be sure to find themselves in the tenderest fellowship.

The preaching of the gospel has had this result. The solidarity of Europe, partial as it is, yet real, is due to Him; the very phrase, "brotherhood of man," dates from Him; it was a fact before it was a doctrine; men felt it first, and then believed it; people of strange nations, habits, climes, drew to Him, and found themselves speaking in language which all His people could understand: the ex-

perience gave them the entry to each other's hearts. This was the miracle of Pentecost, and it has often been repeated. It was the experience of the first missionaries of the Church; it was the story of the conversion of Europe; it has been seen again in our own times, in the missions following the Evangelical Revival. And out of this experience there has come that doctrine which is to-day an alphabetic truth among Christians, that God has made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth.

As we recall the story of the spread of the gospel among the nations, the wonder grows upon us that, having done so much for

the extension of the kingdom of heaven, Christ's servants have not done more. There is a tedious monotony in all the records of missionary work among the heathen and of the revivals of piety in Christian lands. Men listening to the gospel are drawn to Christ; they are turned from darkness to light; purer moral habits displace old corruptions; society becomes more gracious; and then there is a stop. Christians begin to be satisfied with what has been achieved; conversions are fewer; faith gives way to formalism or rationalism; gradually the former joy dies out, the old enthusiasm is abated, the attraction of the Cross seems to have ceased.

It is due to reaction, we say;

men inevitably grow weary of enthusiasm; rest must come after effort; the high strain of Christian thinking and living cannot be kept up. But there must be a cause of these reactions; and that cause, in Christian experience, it is not hard to find. It is the intrusion of worldly confidence into religious faith; we adopt the methods of the world, appeal to worldly motive, and our spiritual force is gone. Christianity means civilisation; and we work for civilisation, instead of Christianity, trust in civilisation instead of in Christ. The kings of the earth bring their glory and honour into the City of God; and, with their glory and honour, the old ways by which these have been won. Our very

successes prepare the way for failure. We impress a Christian ethical conviction on the world; and, to carry it into effect, the world and the Church must become allies. We learn each other's phrases, yield to each other's prejudices; the result is a compromise between Christian fidelity and blank unbelief. It is impossible to combine the motives of worldliness with the impulses of the Spirit of Christ. Jesus has taught us how to make disciples of all the nations—it is to awaken in them, by faith, the consciousness by which He was Himself sustained; and that faith is as necessary for the permanence and enlargement of the spiritual energies of the kingdom as it is

for men's conversion. Whenever we cease to believe in the sufficiency of the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost; when, instead of teaching one another to observe all things whatsoever He commanded, we ask how much of His teaching we can explain away, we lose the power by which the kingdom is to be sustained, and the world won.

"Now my charms are all o'erthrown,
And what strength I have's my own,
Which is most faint."

Another wonder grows upon us as we contemplate the advancement of Christ's kingdom—Christian ideas seem so prevalent, but their hold upon us is so shallow and in-

secure. Polygamy has ceased in Christendom, our laws forbid it, and social habit condemns it; but prostitution is everywhere, a large number of Christian men and women do not even believe that chastity is possible. We say we have abolished slavery; but even the British people sanction enforced work, and a British government can abet Arab slavery on the East Coast of Africa. We have learnt from the gospel to talk of the dignity of labour, but we talk also of the labouring classes as of inferiors; we have not rid ourselves of the notion that an idle class is essential to the well-being of a refined community. We are in the middle of a period of ethical reaction, and consequent spiritual

depression. There never was a time when war was distasteful to so many as to-day; and yet Europe has no assured peace, and we ourselves are fighting our Christian brothers. Examples of high Christian devotedness were never so numerous as to-day, never were so many giving themselves up, in unceasing effort, to bring men and women to the joy of faith in Christ and to holy living; and, on the other hand, never was there more painful uncertainty as to the results of our labours, never more anxiety about getting money for our projects, and securing efficiency among Christian workers. The reason is that the Church has never been more than half per-

suaded of the sufficiency of spiritual motive and the method of Jesus. Christ and civilisation, Christ and money, Christ and men, Christ and a navy—these are our watchwords. And such an allegiance Christ refuses to acknowledge. Go and baptize, go and teach—this is His precept, solitary in its obligation; and the faith which is to sustain us must be settled on Him alone—"Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

We are hearing strange words from Christian teachers; words which jar painfully on our best spiritual sensibilities; and which, if we listen to them, will, slowly but surely, destroy all our faith. We are warned against a literal

obedience to the Sermon on the Mount; this, we have been told, more than once, would upturn the the foundations of society, and render the further progress of the gospel impossible. Undue literalism is not a present danger in Christian exegesis; everything has been teaching us that we must look to Scripture for meanings rather than for words: "the letter killeth, but the spirit makes alive." Simplicity of interpretation is, however, still the duty of the teacher, and simple obedience the obligation of the Christian man; there is a wise maxim of jurisprudence that we must not change a law under pretence of expounding it. Christ is an example of simple obedience to His own words, and

Christ is to-day seated on the throne of men's hearts more securely than any monarch; His kingdom is more surely founded than our modern civilisation. If the faith of Christ should be really weakened in His people's hearts, there is not a nation in Europe, not a republic, or a colony, across the seas, but would end in disaster; the issue of our civilisation would be ceaseless strife between man and man. We have but partially learnt the force of love; yet we know it to be the only conservative element in human society; but for it the conflict of armaments would simply give way to a battle of the traders, more deadly because more continuous, than war itself. Why are we at war in South Africa? Is

it because we and the Boers have followed Christ's teaching too literally? because we have trusted each other too fully? have believed too blindly in God, who has been indifferent to our mutual wrongs, and failed to give us the security of peace? The question answers itself. If the faith we profess had been deeply rooted in the hearts of both nations; if it had been seriously invoked by either of them; there is no difficulty which patience would not have solved: and an abiding brotherhood would have grown out of our endeavours after conciliation.

When Christ bade His apostles baptize men into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the

Holy Ghost, what did He mean? He was not giving them a dogmatic formula, though dogmatic formulas and expositions have grown out of His injunction. He meant that God was fully made known to men in Him; that the moral character which He revealed was God's character; and that the method of His sway was the method by which God rules the world. He meant that the Spirit who was to proceed from Him, to animate the thinkings of His people, inspire their hearts, mould their character, and rule their conduct, would bring all into conformity with His Father; so that God could abide with His children, and govern them as a family is ordered. Is this incredible? No other reading of

the Gospel is credible. It is this which wins the heathen and gives them confidence in their Christian teachers. Destroy this faith—the religion of Jesus will be like other religions, having sway over a few nations for a few centuries, and then giving way to something else.

When Christ bade His apostles teach the nations to observe all things whatsoever He had commanded, what did He mean? He meant that we were to be followers and imitators of Him. Do those who tell us that the Sermon on the Mount was not intended for absolute obedience forget that Jesus obeyed it absolutely? He who gave His disciples the rule of entire unselfishness lived a life of sacrifice. Self-forgetfulness, ab-

sence of care for self, was not a luxury which only those who are already well provided for may enjoy. He shewed it to be a law which all may follow. He was poor, but He was able to live. He talked of dangers, even to life, but He bade us not be afraid, and He knew what He was speaking of. He said, "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom"; and the Father has raised Him to the throne of the earth as well as of heaven. If He bade us "resist not evil," and turn the other cheek, we must not forget that Christians have seen in Him the man who "gave his cheek to the smiters," that He would not let His servants fight that He should

not be delivered to the Jews. The trial—the two-fold trial—has been made. The history of the world is a long condemnation of the methods of self-caring, and the watchfulness of self-defence. The history of the Church shews that only Christ's method has in it the secret of enduring progress, only this can assure the victory of the truth.

Of course, if when we say "kingdom of heaven," we do not mean kingdom of heaven, but worldly kingdoms, to maintain which we invoke certain truths which we cull out of the gospel, leaving the rest uncared for and untried, our kingdoms will be insecure; and so they ought to be. It is not Christendom as we see it

to-day that Christ came to establish, but another kingdom, the rule of "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." Christ's method is sufficient for this, and He knows no other kingdom.

We are told that if this method were largely adopted, the world would come to an end. Yes; the world, as we know it, would come to an end; it was to bring this world to an end, and establish a better, that Christ came. The end of this world is what all Christians profess to be longing for, that instead of it may come the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

O! if we would but make trial of Christ's new way, what revelations of glory and power would be

vouchsafed to us. Then, indeed, there would be that baptism of the Holy Ghost for which so many devout souls are watching and praying. The Holy Ghost will never come in His fulness while we are only seeking more power to live happy lives in our own worldly ways.

"Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my word: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." And in our text we learn that to keep His word is to teach

the nations to observe all things whatsoever He has commanded us. Christendom has never yet attempted this. When it does so, new grace will descend upon us all, and the longing of Christian hearts will be fulfilled—"The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever."

V.

The Christian Patriot and the War.

THE CHRISTIAN PATRIOT AND THE WAR.

"And the Lord said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not be king over them."—1 SAMUEL VIII. 7.

THERE seems to be a strange contrast, even an inconsistency, between the first words of our text and those which follow. "The Lord said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee." We should expect after this introduction some words of, at least modified, approval of the wish of the people to have a king—it is a natural wish; an inevitable stage

in their development; it expresses a reasonable desire. But the Lord goes on to utter an absolute condemnation of their demand; the sinfulness of it is greater than even Samuel has thought. "They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not be king over them."

The first effect of these words must have been solemnising on Samuel; they must have quieted his sense of personal grievance because of the ingratitude of the men he had served so long and so well. God's wrong was much greater than his, and God was patient. Self-righteousness, even in its purest form, is no way of working the righteousness of God. Men will protest and argue, when

they vindicate themselves and their cause, but the heart to protest and argue is taken from us when God shews that He too has cause of complaint.

Samuel is restored not only to composure, but to some measure of hope. He is allowed to clear his own conscience by a final protest; he is bidden make one last appeal to the people, to shew them the manner of the king who will reign over them. And when he finds his words ineffectual, as he knows they will be, his opposition is to cease. God has taken the matter into His hands: He knows that persistence in an unrighteous cause, the reaping of the whirlwind by those who have sown the wind, is sometimes the surest, the only way of bring-

ing them to a right mind. He has not forsaken the people who have rejected Him; through ways of bitterness He can lead to peace. Such is God's method of softening the hardened hearts of rebels against His authority. "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee, the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain," that is the Old Testament truth. The Apostle Paul puts it more boldly, more graciously, "Where sin abounded, grace did yet more abound; that as sin reigned in death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

We are here face to face with one of the most afflictive processes

of human and Christian discipline. Men are sometimes obliged, by the necessities of their past, to go on in a course which is wounding to their tenderest sensibilities, and has become morally hateful to them. We are not always able, after our repentance and conversion, to choose the best; and that not because of the degradation of the spiritual sense—God's grace has overcome this—but because, in our sin, we entangled ourselves in obligations which we cannot shake off without doing more evil than we should avoid. Occasionally this comes out in the unwritten biography of saints. We have known a man eminent for godliness, and we discover that he has gone softly all his years in the bitter-

ness of his soul; we find that he was to the last unable to free himself from compromising conditions into which he was brought in his unregenerate days. A great pitifulness comes over us as we recall such stories, and a great awe. A man's life, as well as his bones, may be full of the sins of his youth. God is very gracious; but the man is called to daily contrition as he does something which he would gladly not do, but to which past sinful obligations compel him.

The same is true of nations. Under the preaching of the gospel, and the teaching of the law of Christ, there is a continual elevation of the moral sense, a growing exactingness of the Christian heart which leads us to condemn

much in our national past. We would gladly wipe the slate clean, but we cannot. We would do only the best things, but our own past has made that impossible. We do not find a way of repentance, though we seek it carefully with tears. How gladly would we efface from our history the early narrative of the East India Company and the conquest of India. But we are in India, and we must stay there; we must do our work in the India we have made. How gladly would we undo the Berlin treaty, and the following years when we were preparing to be powerless for the help of Armenia, for whose condition we could not hold ourselves irresponsible. Thousands of our people are

wishing to speak peace to the Republics in South Africa, but the time for speaking peace has passed, and it will be long before it returns. We should not be believed if we made advances, and our own action has produced the incredulity; we could not withdraw our troops without slaughter; we cannot abandon Natal and the loyal inhabitants of Cape Colony. We believe honestly that for Englishmen to remain in South Africa would be of advantage to that Continent and to the world; and we see, as the result of our own diplomacy, no chance of remaining there, but through the war.

"Though the mills of God grind slowly,
yet they grind exceeding small;
Though with patience He stands waiting, with exactness grinds He all."

What is the duty of a Christian patriot in this national crisis? the duty of those who are in no way responsible for the war; who have protested against it, and who would, even at the last, have used conciliatory language, and sought by mutual concession, a way of peace? Especially, what is the duty of the few of us who believe that, nearly always, for a Christian people to go to war is a crime? and of the many who believe that in this war England and the Boer Republics are both guilty of having rejected Christ, that He should not be King over us?

One thing we should be mindful of—the solidarity of the nation. We are Englishmen; bound up

in the sight of other nations with the action of our Government, and partakers in all its responsibilities. The proper sphere for our remonstrances is our own land; it is not simply undignified, it is futile, it may be mischievous, to carry our complaints of our own countrymen to other rulers and strange peoples. It is the part of a Christian patriot to teach his own people, by his conduct as well as his words, to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with their God. It may be equally his duty not to be too eager to establish his own freedom from bloodguiltiness, lest, in calling down on his nation the opprobrium of other nations, he weaken its moral influence, and

take from its rulers the power of amending the wrongs they have committed. And even at home silence may sometimes be wiser and better than speech. We ought not to infuriate the passions of the mob by our own wild words; nor harden those who have brought on us this iniquity by constantly putting them to self-defence. "The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient; in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth, and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will." These words

are for home, as well as foreign, application, and our text teaches us that they may be but the more applicable where the ungodlines of national conduct is the more pronounced.

Another duty of the Christian patriot is composure, hopefulness, a belief in the destiny of his nation. Samuel's words in the twelfth chapter are full of a beautiful wisdom; they are sad, but they check despondency. He saw that the people might be good or bad subjects under the king whom they had chosen. They had made their own way, but in that way they might yet be obedient to the Lord their God. And he encourages them by reminding them that the

Lord had chosen them to be His people, and was not forsaking them, even in this hour of their apostasy. A way of obedience is never impossible. Nothing will be so good as it might have been but for this sin; and yet Samuel says, "If ye will fear the Lord, and serve him, and hearken unto his voice, and not rebel against the commandment of the Lord, and both ye and also the king that reigneth over you be followers of the Lord your God, well; but if ye will not hearken unto the voice of the Lord, but rebel against the commandment of the Lord, then shall the hand of the Lord be against you, as it was against your fathers."

There is a better, and there

is a worse way in which a people may comport themselves, even in time of war; and we are seeing to-day examples of both in our journals and in people's talk. If we are not always uttering vehement condemnation of what now cannot be avoided, and strenuous assertions that we will have no complicity with the policy of the nation, we may be the better able to help those among us who are seeking to understand our enemies, to abate the prejudice against the Boers which so many think it patriotic to cherish; who read with satisfaction stories of their generosity and courage, their fortitude and their faith in God; and are slow to believe all the things said for the purpose of

bringing them into contempt, even as we should wish them to judge of questionable proceedings, or unverified rumours, which may be reported to them of us. And we shall be listened to in those days, which are sure to come, when both peoples will be sick of the conflict, and willing to end it, as we plead for generosity in the settlement, and patience in the formulating and carrying out of terms of peace.

The days will come for the resumption of that method of colonising, and caring for the liberties of other nations, the development of their commerce, the bringing to them for their enjoyment the fruits of Christian civilisation, which has been our

glorious tradition. God does not cast off any nation which He foreknew; neither the people whose fathers He placed within the four seas, and trained, and bore with, and pardoned, and restored, and led to leadership in the world; nor the people whose fathers He inured to heroic resistance of Papal domination by endurance and struggle on the flats of Holland, and by years of martyrdom in France. When the Twentieth Century comes to an end, England will be, and the Boers will be; and both will read the record of this war, brought about by their joint madness and forgetfulness of spiritual forces and apostasy from Christ. Then will they see whom they rejected in despising one

another; they will, we may hope, look upon Him whom they have pierced and mourn because of Him. This war cannot now be undone; but its terrible lessons may be learned. God chastens nations, as He chastens individuals, by their sin—"with pain and continual strife in their bones. Their soul draweth near unto the pit, and their life to the destroyers. Lo, all these things worketh God oftentimes with man, to bring back his soul from the pit, that he may be enlightened with the light of the living."

One of the most pathetic touches in this history—and it is profoundly true to the workings of the heart of a chosen nation—is

where the people are overwhelmed with the conviction, which must have been more than once their suspicion, that in their demand for a king they were making shipwreck of wisdom and faith. It was too late to go back on their resolution, and they were seized with a great fear. "And all the people said unto Samuel, Pray for thy servants unto the Lord thy God, that we die not: for we have added unto all our sins this evil, to ask us a king." The hearts of English statesmen to-day are not so light as those of the populace. There are many who are not easy in their approval of the war; I can read the signs of this in some of the requests made to the churches to keep this day as one of humili-

ation and prayer. "Brethren, pray for us," that is the appeal reaching us from many an anxious heart. And what can the churches do but make Samuel's reply their own? "As for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you: but I will instruct you in the good and the right way. Only fear the Lord, and serve him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great things he hath done for you. But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both ye and your king."

The desire for prayer will not seem strange to those who understand the difficulties and dangers in the way of national

righteousness; how the whole habit of a people may bear them inevitably on the wrong course, and how impossible it may be, when they have begun, to turn back. And the knowledge of what to pray for, the spirit to pray aright, will be vouchsafed us, by Him who helps our infirmities, and who knows that what is in our mind is the accomplishment of the will of God.

Only, there must be no separation of ourselves from our fellow-countrymen in our praying; ours is the office of the intercessor, not of the judge. If we were not Englishmen, we should not be at all; what we sometimes speak of as the accident of our birth is the essential fact in our personality.

And we cannot separate ourselves from our fellow-countrymen; in doom and destiny we are bound up with them. I for one have no desire to cut myself off from England in the hour of her strain and shame. There are no words in the Bible for which I am more devoutly thankful than these, "God hath shut all up unto disobedience, that he might have mercy upon all." He would deliver us from the temper of the chafferer; He would take from us the temptation to clear ourselves, to minimise our guilt by accusing others. In His magnificent compassion He appears with an act of oblivion in His hand, for each and all; for each and all a new life and possibilities of a better

end. "For I know the thoughts which I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart."

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